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THE WORSHIP OF STONES IN FRANCE

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TRANSLATED BY JOSEPH D. McGUIRE

If archeologists who, for half a century, have with so much zeal drawn up the catalogue of megalithic monuments in France, who have described, measured, and even at times made drawings of them, had with the same care made inquiries concerning the views to which they have given rise among the country folk, we would be much better informed than we now are concerning this particular folklore. Some investigators have shown carelessness; others, after making certain inquiries which brought forth only obscure or evasive replies, have become discouraged; yet others, more persevering and skilful in obtaining the confidence of the peasants, have been more fortunate. But even to these latter everything has not been told. There are ceremonies of which the people do not willingly speak, either because of their sacred character, which should not be divulged, or because of the ridicule which might be made of them, by the inhabitants of the towns, concerning the traditional services of a strange and grotesque character which are not related to Christianity and which are remote from existing customs. This is probably the reason why it is that, in the center and south of France, or in the Ardèche and Aveyron, rough stone monuments are so numerous, yet have developed so few facts. Owing to the life led by the inhabitants and the relative isolation of this region, the old customs and ancient beliefs are better preserved than they are in those places which are more thickly populated and more open.

Up to the present time the geographic distribution of observations made concerning the survival of the worship of stones

is interesting to study, though one cannot draw definite conclusions from them. The most numerous and most typical monuments are found in western France. Out of one hundred and fifty of this class which are recorded, about one hundred are found in the ancient provinces of Brittany, Poitou, and Normandy, where popular traditions, it is true, have long been studied; except in the first locality, however, they are not rich in megaliths. Another, less important, group corresponds to the Orléanais, to Île-de-France, and to Picardy. In the east, Burgundy alone furnishes a curious collection of facts; in the south, no appreciable numbers are encountered, except in certain parts of Provence and Languedoc. Outside of these localities, which constitute scarcely a fourth part of France, only isolated instances are noted. But it is probable that this void is due to lack of energy, or of familiarity on the part of investigators, for several of these localities have preserved megalithic monuments, and in places numbers of them, and there have been found there many curious facts which are connected with other folktales.

It may be concluded that we are far from knowing all the practices now in use, but those which up to the present have been established suffice to demonstrate that, after eighteen centuries of Christianity, there yet exist in France very apparent vestiges of a stone worship more ancient than Druidism. It evidences itself in two aspects—one is purely pagan, in which it is almost clandestine and often individual and not easily discovered; in the other the ancient rite is covered with a veneer of Christianity, under which it is easily recognized, even where the Church, in the hope of destroying or of at least transforming it, has appeared to give it a sort of consecration.

In this study I have collected references to those practices which are herein noted, whether they were connected with natural stones, remarkable because of their peculiarities, or whether they were connected with veritable megaliths; and I have also assembled those which often present no Christian characteristics

and which do not differ from them except by a slight though visible intervention of modern religion.

STONES THE ABODES OF SUPERNATURAL BEINGS

It is probable that many centuries before our era the people of Gaul believed, as did many contemporaneous groups who were little advanced in civilization, that particular stones, because of their size or shape, or because of their odd form, were the abodes of supernatural beings which communicated to them a sort of power. This view still exists in France, and numberless contemporaneous legends relate that enormous rocks, or rocks of singular appearance, have been inhabited by the fairies or in rarer instances by hobgoblins; they have only very recently ceased to reside in them, and at times even now they are not very certain that these personages have departed from them.

Certain of these stones are considered as being powerful and sacred, and people yet continue to beg of them luck and happiness, and associate with them performances which, by their rudeness, coarseness, and odd appearance, suggest great antiquity. These rites have probably preceded those of like character, modified at times, which more civilized tribes have conducted near the rough stones set up by the hands of men, or even on monuments themselves. One may call this worship *pre-megalithic*, and it appears to be the oldest, especially when the practices still take place on natural stones.

SLIDING AND RUBBING

Sliding (*la glissade*), the best-preserved of the pre-megalithic forms of worship, is characterized by the contact, at times brutish, of a part of the person of the believer with the stone itself. The most typical examples which have been preserved (and as the rites have no doubt generally been carried on in secret, much has escaped the observer) are in relation to love and fecundity.

In the north of Ille-et-Vilaine are a series of large blocks, at times, but not always, worn into cups, which have received the significant name of "Roches Écriantes" because the young girls, that they may soon be married, climb to the top of them and let themselves slide (in patois *écrier*) to the bottom ; and some of them, indeed, are to a certain extent polished because of the oft-repeated ceremony, observed by numberless generations, which we are assured has been practised there.¹

At Plouër, in the French portion of the Côtes-du-Nord, the girls have been, from time immemorial, *s'écrusser* on the highest block of white quartz of Lesmon, which has a rounded pyramidal shape. It is very smooth on the side on which the sliding is done, and this polish is due to the numberless generations which, we are assured, have performed the practice there. In order that she may know whether she will be married within the year, the young girl, before letting herself slide, should turn up her skirts, and should she succeed in reaching the bottom without rubbing off the flesh, she is assured of soon finding a husband.²

At Mellé (Ille-et-Vilaine) the "Roche Écriante" was worn full of basins ; on the rock of the same name at Montault, a neighboring parish, inclined at an angle of 45°, there were visible evidences of numberless girls who had there *écrites*. After the sliding it was necessary to place on the stone, which, however, no one must see done, a little piece of cloth or ribbon.³

This custom has been shown to exist in localities quite far from Brittany. The day of the feast of the patron, at Bonduen, in Provence, the young girls who wished to marry have for a long time gone to slide on a rock, behind the church, which forms an inclined plane, and which has become polished like marble. This performance was called *l'escourencho* (barking).⁴ Those of the

¹ Danjou de la Garenne in *Mémoires de la Soc. Arch. d' Ille-et-Vilaine*, 1882, pp. 57-59.

² Paul Sébillot, *Traditions et Superstitions de la Haute-Bretagne*, I, p. 48.

³ P. Bézier, *Inventaire des Mégalithes de l'Ille-et-Vilaine*, pp. 100-101.

⁴ Bérenger-Féraud, *Superstitions et Survivances*, II, p. 177.

valley of Ubayette (Basses-Alpes), for the purpose of finding a husband and to become fruitful, let themselves slide down an ancient sacred stone in the village of St Ours.¹

La glissade appears rarely to have been practised on true megaliths, for the reason that they rarely present the inclination necessary to its accomplishment. It is, however, said at Loc-mariaker, in the Morbihan, that formerly every young girl who wished to marry within the year, on the night of the first of May got on the large menhir, turned up her skirts and let herself slide from top to bottom.² The menhir mentioned was the largest one known; but it is now broken in four pieces which lie on the ground; according to most authors it was still standing at the beginning of the eighteenth century. This custom, which could not be followed when the stone stood vertical, twelve meters in height, is, then, relatively modern, yet it is possible that the young girls of the locality have come to follow, on the pieces, an ancient custom which was formerly held on some natural stone in the neighborhood.

In the Belgian *wallone* they had somewhat modified this custom, which was practised on the rock of Ride-Cul, near a chapel which they irreverently called "Notre Dame de Ride-Cul." Every year, on the 25th of March, this was the center of a pilgrimage, and the young people, both boys and girls, seated themselves on the top of the stone on little fagots of wood collected near by; then they let themselves slide down the rapid decline. From the incidents of the descent they drew omens and said: "If there is an upset (*glissement interrompu*), it is a sign that they must wait; if there is a collision, it is that they are in love; if there is a shock, it is a sign that they do not love; if there is a collision followed by a rolling off, it is that they have agreed." They were not allowed to make the test over again.³

¹ Girard de Rialle, *Mythologie Comparée*, p. 29.

² Lionel Bonnemère in *Revue des Traditions Populaires*, IX, p. 123.

³ *Wallonia*, v, p. 13.

It is not impossible that a great rock near Hyères (Var), which is called the Sliding Stone, formerly served the purpose of a rite analogous to those here described, and that this stone was merely the survivor of a prior one. The young girls wishing to marry within the year go to it and put on its summit a bouquet of myrtle; at the end of ten days they return, and if the myrtle is still on top the wish will come true; should it, however, have fallen off, they must wait.¹

This old and rude custom was observed only by those young girls who were anxious to have husbands—never by the men. It appears, indeed, that there may be cited rare instances in which the rite was performed after marriage. In some parts of Aisne it constituted a sort of ordeal which in later times assumed a facetious character which it did not formerly possess. In several villages there was a stone for the bride, upon which she was obliged to get on her marriage day. She sat there on a sabot and let herself slide the length of the incline. According to what happened at the bottom,—whether she arrived easily or without obstruction; whether she went to the right or to the left, or kept in the middle,—conclusions were drawn which were always expressed in obscene language; and if, for example, the sabot broke on coming to the bottom, the cry “She has broken her sabot!” would be ironically hallooed into the husband’s ears.²

In several localities in France, at quite a distance from where this ceremony occurred, the expression “having broken her sabot” was equivalent to saying one had lost her virtue. This ceremony, which is almost always performed in connection with love affairs, appears also to have been employed to facilitate childbirth. Thus far, however, it has only been observed in Ain, a league from St Alban, near Poncin, where pregnant women, as late as the nineteenth century, in hope of having a happy de-

¹ A. de Larrive in *Revue des Traditions Populaires*, xvi, p. 182.

² Edouard Fleury, *Antiquités de l’Aisne*, I, p. 105.
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livery, let themselves slide from the top of a flat rock which is considerably inclined.¹

Founded also on belief in the virtue in stones, the custom which may be designated by the name "rubbing" was more clearly phallic than was *la glissade*, as it often consisted not so much in the contact of the hind-parts of the suppliant, as in rubbing the bare navel, or stomach, or perhaps the genital organs themselves. It appears, in fact, that the observers have not always described this custom without certain eliminations. Natural stones, or those erected by the hand of man, presented a relief of round or oblong shape, the appearance of which recalled a phallus and had probably suggested the act which was accomplished by means of it, and which, in a primitive period (and perhaps even now), constituted a sort of sacrifice to the genius of the stone. If the rapid slide gave the woman a shaking analogous to that of the "gravity railroad," the rubbing with the consecrated part of the stone might raise in them sensations of another nature.

At Carnac the young girls who wanted a husband undressed completely and went and rubbed their navels against a menhir especially devoted to this usage. The boys of marriageable age kept careful guard at a respectful distance from the place where the ceremony was practised.² In Eure-et-Loir they turned up their skirts, and in the evening rubbed their stomachs against a projection of the Pierre de Chantecoq, also called Mère aux Cailles, which is at a suitable height.³ Toward the middle of the nineteenth century love-sick girls gave themselves up to the same practice on a stone of the covered way of the Roche Marie, near St Aubin du Cormier (Ille-et-Vilaine), which is now destroyed.⁴

Similar observances took place after the marriage, and in Finistère, at all events, the newly married people both took part.

¹ Aimé Vingtrinier in *Revue du Siècle*, Avril, 1900.

² *Matériaux pour l'Histoire de l'Homme*, x, p. 123.

³ Gustave Fouju in *Revue des Traditions Populaires*, x, p. 673.

⁴ Paul Sébillot, *Traditions de la Haute-Bretagne*, I, p. 48.

The couple went afoot to the menhir of Plouarzel, the largest in the department, which has on two of its opposing faces a round knob at about a meter's height. After having partly undressed, the woman on one side and the husband on the other rub their stomachs against one of the knobs. The man thinks, in acting thus, to have male children rather than girls, and the woman hopes in that way to be the mistress of the household. Near the market town of Moëlan newly married people rub themselves, for a like object, on a menhir which has an unevenness.¹ I am assured that the custom carried out on the stone of Plouarzel has recently become modified: the young married couple go there the second night after their marriage; the wife embraces the menhir from one side and the husband from the other, and if their lips happen to be just opposite one to the other the couple are assured of having male children.

In Eure-et-Loir the young women who desired to have children rubbed their abdomens against a rough place in the Pierre de Chantecoq. This stone had, as we have seen, the power of obtaining husbands for them.² The women of the neighborhood of Simandre (Ain) accomplished the same object on the menhir erected there.³ At St Ronan (Finistère) the young married people a few years since (and it is not certain that they do not still do so) came and rubbed their abdomens against the Jument de Pierre, a colossal stone standing in the middle of a moor and resembling a fabulous animal.⁴ To be confined "every seven months" the women went to render the same homage to the Pierre Longue, near Dax, in Landes.⁵ About the middle of the nineteenth century, the women of the country of Luchon, in order to be fruitful, rubbed themselves against a menhir on the mountain of

¹ Paul du Châtelier, *Inventaire des Monuments Mégalithiques du Finistère*, p. 24.

² Gustave Fouju in *Rev. des Trad. Pop.*, x, p. 673.

³ Tardy, *Le Menhir de Simandre*, p. 3.

⁴ A. Le Braz, *Au Pays des Pardons*, p. 249.

⁵ J. F. Bladé, *Contes de Gascogne*, II, p. 378.

Bourg d'Oueil and they embraced it with fervor.¹ Several of these blocks had the reputation of causing women to be fruitful. At the end of the eighteenth century, sterile wives rubbed themselves on two rocks of Locronan (Finistère) where the wheels of a cart which carried the body of St Ronan left an impression. They assert at Cambry that the mother of the Duc de Coigny owed the Duke's birth to this operation twenty years after the marriage of his father.² At Sarrance (Basses Pyrénées) the women, saddened by not being mothers, came and devoutly passed and repassed on a little rock named the "Rouquet de Sent Nicoulas."³ At St Étienne, in Coglès (Ille-et-Vilaine), they rubbed themselves a short time since on a mushroom-like formation on a rock which has on its summit a superb basin.⁴

In Auvergne this practice, slightly christianized and doubtless modified, according to tradition, was performed at the chapel of Orcival where sterile women, after having made three times the turn of a pillar, came and rubbed themselves against it.⁵

Rubbing against stones was not only efficacious in affairs touching love or fruitfulness; recourse was also had to it when it was desired to gain strength or to recover health. Up to the present time the most typical facts have been shown in Breton localities, and several of the stones to which they address themselves bear the name of some biblical hero renowned for strength, and that of a holy Breton bishop to whom a similarity of name has very likely been worth the privilege.

At Plœmeur-Bodou (Côtes-du-Nord) to give strength to the children and young people they rub their loins against the stone of St Samson, near the chapel dedicated to that saint.⁶ The rock of the same name at Trégastel had a hollowed-out place

¹ Julien Sacaze, *Le Culte des Pierres dans le Pays de Luchon*.

² Cambry, *Voyage dans le Finistère*, p. 278.

³ V. Lespy, *Proverbes de Béarn*, 2d ed., p. 144.

⁴ P. Bézier, *Inv. des Mdg. de l'Ille-et-Vilaine*, p. 111.

⁵ Pommerol in *l'Homme*, 1886, p. 623.

⁶ G. Le Calvez in *Rev. des Trad. Pop.*, v, p. 93.

used by the pilgrims,¹ the same as in the menhir at St Landunvez, Finistère, where it was the shoulder that was rubbed.

In passing by Guimaec, the pilgrims who go to St-Jean-du-Doigt rub their backs against the highest one of thirteen stones of a megalithic monument of oval form called Bez-an-Inkinèrez ("Tomb of the Spinner"), in the hope of being preserved from rheumatism.² Many persons accomplish the same observance on the shaft of the cross of the Sept Douleurs ("Seven Griefs") at the town of Batz (Loire-Inférieure), which is very ancient and has probably taken the place of a menhir.³

ASCENT OF AND PAUSING ON STONES

In climbing up on stones remarkable for their peculiarities, or stones difficult to mount (at times even to sit on them), it was supposed one could obtain favors similar to those which were obtained by sliding or rubbing. Persons who wished to marry with little delay had to climb to the top of the upright stone of Colombiers, deposit a piece of money, and then jump down from the top. Two other stones in the neighborhood of Bayeux were the objects of similar observances.⁴ Those who could get to the top of the menhir of St Samson (Côtes-du-Nord) were assured of being married within the year.⁵ To obtain this result it is necessary that the young girl get up on the basin stone of St Étienne at Coglès (Ille-et-Vilaine) on which is clandestinely performed the rite of friction, that she remain there upright, and that she does not blush before the pilgrims forming the assembly at St Eustache.⁶

In the neighborhood of Fougères there is a "Devil's Chair," on which it suffices if one sits during a particular time (at a

¹ A. Descubes in *Rev. des Trad. Pop.*, v, p. 575.

² Paul du Châtelier, *Még. du Finistère*, p. 71.

³ *Le Bourg de Batz, Histoires et Légendes*, 1898, p. 158.

⁴ Amélie Bosquet, *La Normandie Romanesque*, p. 176.

⁵ Paul Sébillot, *Trad. de la Haute-Bretagne*, I, p. 50.

⁶ A. Dagnet, *Au Pays Fougères*, p. 102.

particular period of the year), in order that he or she whom the one had in view may finish by reciprocating his love.¹

Other stones were associated with ancient marriage customs, and there were some, as for example the Pierre à la Mariée, of Graçay (Cher), upon which a bride had to dance on the day of her marriage, which bore a name corresponding to this ceremony.² In the Basses-Alpes they called "Pierre des Epoux," a conical stone to which the nearest relations of the husband conducted the bride after the religious ceremony; the bride sat there, resting one foot in a groove intended to receive it, and holding the left foot suspended. It was in this position that she received the congratulations of the members of both families.³

Sterile women also came to certain stones at Decines (Rhône), asking to be made fruitful; formerly they crouched on a monolith which stands in the middle of a field at a place called Pierrefrite,⁴ at Locronan (Finistère); and a few years ago they lay down on the "Jument de Pierre" of St Ronan, a natural rock of colossal size.⁵

During the sixteenth century a statue which bore the name of a saint (of whose name there are many variants), and to which is attached a phallic significance, was regarded as having the same fruitful properties as the stones above mentioned. This is the way a contemporary writer describes the pilgrimage of which it was the objective: "St Guerlichon, which is an abbey of the town of Bourg-dieu, near Romorantin, and in several other places, prided itself to get with child as many women who would present themselves, provided that, during the time of their novena, they did not fail to recline in devotion on the blessed statue which lies down and is not upright as are the others. Besides this, it is requisite that each day they drink a certain bever-

¹ A. Dagnet, *Au Pays Fougerais*, p. 102.

² L. Martinet, *Le Berry Préhistorique*, p. 87.

³ Alfred de Nore, *Mythes et Coutumes*, p. 7.

⁴ E. Chantre in *l'Homme*, 1885, p. 75.

⁵ A. Le Braz, *Au Pays des Pardons*, p. 249.

age which is mixed with the powder scraped from a certain part of it, which bears a name too indecent to mention.”¹

There were also stones which, by reason of their origin, or of their shape, imparted strength or health to those placed upon them or even to those who went to visit them.

New-born children were exposed on the table of the dolmen of Trie (Oise). The name of the stone, “To the New Born,” which the dolmen of Margon (Eure-et-Loir) bears, connects itself, perhaps, to a similar custom.²

At the time of the Troménie, or procession of St Ronan, fever patients, or persons subject to nervous disorders, did not fail to sit in an unevenness of the stone, which was a sort of natural chair, where the saint formerly came to meditate.³

The sick who lay down near the Hautes-Bornes, in Aisne, on the night of St John’s day, awoke cured. The women pretend that by going to the stone of Clouise, in the forest of Villers-Cotterets, they cure themselves without uttering the name of the saint, whom they should invoke by cracking the fingers.⁴

PASSING THROUGH OR UNDER STONES

Several stones were regarded as having a certain influence on destiny or health because of their having in them natural or artificial holes. The ceremony consisted of introducing into the opening the head, the hand, or other members of the suppliant. In l’Aisne a number of these stones were to be seen. The head was usually placed in the hole for the purpose of questioning the future, and the young girls did so in order to see if they were destined to marry.⁵

The peasants attributed a particular value to oaths exchanged

¹ Henri Estienne, *Apologie pour Hérodote*, liv. I, ch. 38.

² Gustave Fouju in *Rev. des Trad. Pop.*, XIV, pp. 477, 478.

³ A. Le Braz, *Au Pays des Pardons*, p. 249.

⁴ Ed. Fleury, *Antiquités de l’Aisne*, I, pp. 102, 107.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

through the opening of the menhir of "Draché" (Indre-et-Loire), and engaged couples were not content until the promise of marriage was exchanged through the stone; indeed, even the grass growing from the foot of it insured good luck.¹ At Allaines (Eure-et-Loir), young married people must visit the pierced stone and pass their arm into its opening.

At the close of the eighteenth century, M. Coquebert, an antiquarian, visited the dolmen of Trie (Oise), the bottom stone of which he says was pierced from one side to the other by an irregular hole, through which the people of the neighborhood were accustomed from time immemorial to pass their weak and feeble children under a firm conviction that it would give them health. In addition, it has lately preserved them from fevers. The children were introduced head first into this hole from the outer side.² In Aisne, young mothers, in order to overcome bad luck, had their children passed through a stone which had a hole in it, while in Eure-et-Loir, in order to insure new-born children against witchcraft, they had them also passed through the hole in the dolmen of Allaines, which is now destroyed.³

This custom, more or less christianized, is sometimes observed in churches. One reads in the *procès verbal* of a visit to the church of St Jean de Marillais, in 1644, that the clergy stopped up a hole which was in the bottom of the altar, in order to allay the superstition practised by parents who inserted into it the heads of their children.⁴

In Allier they placed the head of a young child into the opening made in the tomb of St Menoux, and they deposited an offering therein, in order that they might not become imbecile.⁵ Not far from Courville (Eure-et-Loir), the mothers, in order that their children should walk alone, had their little feet passed into

¹ L. Bousrez, *Mégalithes de la Touraine*, p. 71.

² Ch. Coquebert in *Bulletin de la Société des Sciences*, Paris, 1799-1801, II, p. 39.

³ G. Fouju in *Rev. des Trad. Pop.*, XIV, pp. 477-478.

⁴ Célestin Port in *Soc. des Antiquaires de France*, 1884, p. 76.

⁵ Bardoux in *Société d'Émulation de l'Allier*, 1867, p. 345.

the aperture of a pierced stone placed in a chapel called La Madelaine.¹ At Marcamps, in Gironde, was the hole of St Jean, made in a wall into which children were also introduced. This, however, lost its virtue after some one passed a dog through it.² Adults practised this observance less often than did the children; nor have I discovered it applied to megaliths, though it appears probable that such was the case. At Ivry the faithful passed their hands through a square hole in the back of the altar of the chapel of St Frambour, among the stones on which the saint rested when he was fatigued; after this they drank water from a neighboring cistern.³

At Marly-le-Vicomte, when a domestic animal became sick it was led to the Borne stone, which had a hole in it, and to obtain a cure it was necessary to pass through the hole a piece of money which was not picked up again.⁴

The act which consists of crawling under a stone slab, where the supports usually left but little space between it and the ground, does not connect itself, so directly as did those preceding it, with megalithic worship. Although such a practice was anciently performed, it does not appear to have taken place under the slabs covering dolmens. As these were almost invariably hidden under a tumulus, they could not, except in rare instances, serve the purpose, and even if they did, the practice was not undertaken except in relatively modern times, after their mortuary purpose was forgotten. I do not believe that any one has discovered a single example of a passage under a megalithic monument which has not been subjected to some modification.

The monk Jacques Demai, in his *Vie de Sainte Clotilde*, published in 1613, speaks of the custom the pilgrims had of passing three times under a stone table which was on the plaza of Andelys, near the fountain of that saint, and which was destroyed in

¹ Vaugeois in *Mém. de la Soc. des Antiq.*, III, p. 375.

² F. Daleau, *Traditions de la Gironde*, p. 44.

³ *Mém. de la Soc. des Antiq.*, I, p. 430.

⁴ Ph. Salmon, *Dict. Archéologique de l'Yonne*, p. 86.

1799. It was possibly an ancient dolmen that had been the tomb of St Etbin in Eure. It was tool-dressed about 1895, and transformed into a table supported by four little columns under which people passed in vain to be cured of pains in the back, as was the case with the great stone of Ymare in Seine-Inférieure, which now forms a roughly squared table with a cross engraved on one of its angles. It stands but eighty centimeters from the ground, and in order to be cured of rheumatism, or even of madness, one must not, in passing under, touch it with his back, nor must the knees touch the earth.¹

At present such little monuments are almost always found in churches and are often said to enclose the body of some saint. Quite a large number have been brought to light under which the rite is yet performed, a few only of which I will note.

According to a belief prevailing in the city of Noirmoutier all persons suffering from fever who pass, by crawling, under the tomb of St Filbert are invariably cured; those who crawl through the two passages which are worn through the monument will marry within the year.² Pilgrims who drag themselves on their knees between the two supports under the tomb of St Villebrand, in the church of St Vulbas, on his feast day, are cured of stomach-ache or colic. There is preserved in the church of St Villers, St Sépulcre (Oise), a stone under which they pass sick children.³

ENCIRCLING THE STONE

The ceremony of encircling the stone, especially when it was not performed by a single individual, took the form of a dance or procession; it possessed an efficacy similar to that of the customs already described, and was performed for the same purpose.

In Auvergne, on the plateau of Puy-de-Mouton, above the anciently inhabited grottos a statue of the virgin has replaced a

¹ Leon Coutil, *Mégalithes de l'Eure*, p. 48; *Mégalithes de la Seine-Inférieure*, p. 21.

² Henri Bourgeois, *La Vendée d'Autrefois*, p. 21. A. Dauzat in *Rev. des Trad. Pop.*, xv, p. 613.

³ Gustave Fouju in *Rev. des Trad. Pop.*, xiv, p. 477.

megalithic monument called the "Pierre Fade," around which formerly on a wedding day all the invited guests promenaded while the newly married couple danced around it three times that the union might be fruitful and the woman a good nurse.¹

In about 1880, not far from Carnac, people who had been married many years and were childless came at the moment of the full moon to a menhir, took off their clothes, and the woman set herself to running around the menhir, endeavoring to escape the pursuit of her husband, which she ended, however, by allowing herself to be caught. The relatives kept watch to prevent inquisitive persons from coming and interfering with those engaged in this singular custom which, it appears, still takes place at times.²

At the end of the eighteenth century, each year on the 15th of August, before sunrise, the women of Croisic left their houses, and all of them holding each others' hands and crying out at the top of their voices, went in the direction of the Pierre Longue, around which they danced all the morning.³ At Locronan the pilgrims three times circled the rock on which is the chair of St Ronan.⁴

One Sunday in 1836 an antiquarian of Poitou observed two men and a woman who had gone to Poitiers for the fête of Ste Radegonde; they stopped at the foot of the Pierre Levée and began to march in procession and made its circuit three times. Having arrived at the place of beginning, they kissed the stone, and after making the sign of the cross, continued their route.⁵ The observer does not say what the object of this ceremony was, but from other things done elsewhere we do know why people addressed themselves to stones.

¹ Bérenger-Féraud, *Superstitions et Survivances*, II, p. 189.

² Paul Sébillot, *Traditions de la Haute-Bretagne*, I, p. 50.

³ E. Richer, *Description du Croisic*, 1823, p. 82.

⁴ Abbé J. M. Abgrall, *Pierres à Bassins*.

⁵ Mangon de la Lande in *Antiquaires de l'Ouest*, 1836, p. 47.

In the Bocage Normand mothers of conscripts go to the Pierre Dyallon, place a bough on the dolmen, and go around it backwards in order that their sons may draw a good number.¹ The husbands whose wives domineer them and make them miserable (others say who fear to be betrayed) went in the night and hopped around the rock at Combourtillé (Ille-et-Vilaine).² At Villars (Eure-et-Loir) they make the horses which are attacked with colic go around a piece of ground called Perron de St Blaise.³

FRAGMENTS OF STONE

On love, generation, and happiness, fragments of certain stones had an influence analogous to that attributed to certain natural stones or to megaliths. At times they amounted to a real charm. In Picardy it was said to young girls: "*Vos vos marierez ech' l'année ci, vos avez des pierres ed' capucin dans vo poche.*" This was in allusion to the popular belief according to which every young girl who takes a little piece of a stone on which a Capuchin prisoner in the great tower of Ham left his impress, gets married before the year rolls round.⁴

In the Beaujolais, women afflicted with sterility scraped a stone placed in an isolated chapel in the middle of the prairies.⁵ At St Sernin des Bois (Saône-et-Loire), they scraped the statue of St Freluchot.⁶ In order to facilitate childbirth, those who were believers carried away fragments of a stone which formerly existed at Avensan in Gironde.⁷

To be protected from sickness, each of the pilgrims selected a

¹ V. Brunet, *Contes du Bocage Normand*, p. 133.

² A. Orain, *Le Folk-Lore de l'Ille-et-Vilaine*, I, p. 105.

³ A. S. Morin, *Le Prêtre et le Sorcier*, p. 280.

⁴ Leroux de Lincy, *Le Livre des Proverbes Français*. L. Dusevel, *Lettres sur le Département de la Somme*, p. 174.

⁵ Claudius Savoye, *Le Beaujolais Préhistorique*, p. 103.

⁶ L. Lex, *Le Culte des Eaux en Saône-et-Loire*, p. 40.

⁷ F. Daleau, *Traditions de la Gironde*, p. 43.

piece of gravel of Arrayé, which is to be seen on the road to St Sauveur in the Hautes-Pyrénées.¹

Particles of stone play a considerable rôle in the medicine of superstition. Its use is ancient, and if most often the dust of the stones, mixed with the drink of sick persons, came from the tombs or from the statues of saints, there were some that were taken from megaliths.

Persons attacked with fever scrape an enormous rough stone, at the edge of Lussac-les-Châteaux and of Persac (Vienne), called (no one knows why) by the name of St Sirot; or they scraped the large Pierre de Chenet in the same quarter on which they place, as offerings, pins and farthings. The dust is mixed with water which they drink nine mornings in succession.² In La Bresse, young mothers, in order to stop the crying of their nursing children, make them take fragments of a stone placed in the midst of the vines at a place called St Clément (perhaps for St Calmant) in the parish of Vounas, in Ain.³ At St Cénéry sur Cère they scrape a menhir to cure colic in children.⁴

The custom of breaking fragments from tombs or statues extends to a very ancient period; following an ancient custom of which Gregory of Tours speaks (in the sixth century), the people scraped stone from the tomb of St Marcel at Paris, and its dust, mixed in a glass of water, passed as a specific for several diseases.⁵

In the seventeenth century, pilgrims attacked with fever or toothache scraped or ate the stone of the tomb of St Thomas at Poitiers, and women gave it to their children also to cure them of toothache.⁶ Numberless examples have in our time been brought to light concerning the efficacy of fragments of stones

¹ Achille Jubinal, *Les Hautes-Pyrénées*, p. 134.

² Beauchet-Filleau, *Pèlerinages du Diocèse de Poitiers*, p. 526. Léon Pineau, *Le Folk-Lore du Poitou*, p. 510.

³ Fr. Renard, *Superstitions Bressanes*, p. 22.

⁴ Bérenger-Féraud, *Superstitions et Survivances*, III, p. 524.

⁵ Dulaure, *Histoire de Paris*, I, p. 73.

⁶ Beauchet-Filleau, *Pèlerinages du Diocèse de Poitiers*, p. 519.

over tombs. The peasants make holes, in the shape of drinking-cups, in the limestone of the tomb of the very blessed Barthélemy Picqueray, placed in a little chapel near Cherbourg; they fill them with water and dilute it with the scrapings of the stone and give it to their children to drink.¹ To cure themselves of fever, the people of Dêols (Indre) drink the marble dust from a tomb in a crypt of the church. At Cernay (Vienne) the particles produced by scraping the tomb of St Serein were mixed with water from the fountain of the same name; those of the mortuary stone of the Holy Virgin were put in the drink given to fever patients.

Sometimes the people, of their own volition, transformed the effigies from the graves of the nobility and gentry into the statues of saints. That of a chevalier which was in the church of Vigeau (Vienne) had received the name of St Eutrope; the relatives of the sick people had scraped with a knife that part which corresponded to the seat of pain of the sick person, who was made to take it in an infusion. If the matter concerned children, the dust was put into their stockings or their shoes.²

At the abbey of Grainetière (Vendée), a stone statue on the tomb of a lord of Parthenay, whose life had been far from edifying, was venerated as that of a saint and they called it St Rognoux. They scraped the nose of this statue and made the children who were troubled with scurf swallow the dust in order to effect a cure. After the destruction of the abbey the head of this statue was placed at the foot of the cross in a niche which was enclosed by an iron grating. This obstruction was soon broken down by the devotees, and for want of a nose, which had completely disappeared, they now scrape other parts of the body.³ Sometimes this practice was associated with the worship of healing waters which ran in the neighborhood. At St Sernin des Bois the pilgrims scraped the statue of St Plotat and made such chil-

¹ Spalikowski, *Paysages et Paysans Normands*, p. 41.

² Beauchet-Filleau, loc. cit., pp. 522, 525-526.

³ A. de la Villegille in *Bull. de la Soc. des Antiquaires de l'Ouest*, 1842.

dren as suffered from general debility drink the dust diluted in water taken from a neighboring spring.¹ Fragments from the stone of the altar of the chapel of St Benoît, at Maillé (Vienne), were diluted in the water of the spring. People suffering from fever who go to drink the water of the pool of Paizay-le-Sac, not far from a chapel dedicated to Ste Marie the Egyptian, mix with it a little powder scraped from the stone of the ancient sanctuary.²

In order to slightly christianize the practice, it appears that certain stones from which individuals came to demand cures had been carried into churches. Several ancient chapels of Beaujolais did, or do yet, enclose miraculous stones the surfaces of which are scraped by the aid of a knife; the powder thus obtained is swallowed and the patients are thereby cured of various diseases. That which was in the chapel of St Ennemond, and which was efficacious against the toothache and colic, has been taken into the neighboring court-yard; yet it is still honored by numerous pilgrims retaining faith in its virtue, who, after kneeling at the foot of the altar, do not forget the miraculous powder, the real object of their pilgrimage.³

MARVELOUS IMPRESSIONS IN STONES

Marvelous impressions are the object of a worship similar to that of great natural stones and megaliths, and is probably as ancient, since it is found established in numbers of places almost in the beginnings of history. In France, if they are found far back in antiquity, they are posterior to the establishment of Christianity, but the impressions attributed to heroes or to gods were visited doubtless by the faithful who came to ask of them for either health or happiness. It is very likely that the apostles were not able to destroy the secular observances all at once, and in consequence they adopted in regard to them the same methods

¹ L. Lex, *Le Culte des Eaux en Saône-et-Loire*, p. 40.

² Beauchet-Filleau, loc. cit., pp. 225-226.

³ Claudius Savoye, *Le Beaujolais Préhistorique*, pp. 100-101.

as they did for the springs, and replaced the name of a pagan deity with that of a popular saint who was renowned for his miracles. This is the reason that there are found in Burgundy, and in near-by regions, so many "Steps of St Martin" or of his favorite steed. According to a local historian,¹ they stake out, so to say, the evangelical journeys. Besides, the church followed the same policy, and the names of illustrious saints of local celebrity replaced those of local divinities without entirely effacing them. Visits continued under the name of pilgrimages and with modifications of the customs more apparent than real.

Gregory of Tours cites several of these impressions signalized by public veneration, and among them those of a stone in the Basilica of Tours on which the saint had sat.² At Poitiers they had erected the church of "Pas Dieu" at the place where his foot had rested, marked after his appearance to Ste Radegonde.³ One of the most ancient pilgrimages of this region took place at "Pas de St Martin" at St Martin la Rivière.⁴ *La Peyra del Péchat dél Boun Diou* ("The Stone of the Sin of the Good Lord"), at Louignac, in Limousin, which has an impression the shape of a foot, is the object of an immemorial worship.⁵ One could multiply these examples, but I will speak here especially only of the observances which, either with or without Christian veneer, connect themselves with a worship of probable pagan origin.

It is very likely that there has been conducted near these impressions practices related to love and fruitfulness, and, as has been already seen, that several of these stones upon which *la glissade*, or rubbing, was practised had cups or basins cut into them,—circumstances which had contributed to cause them to be chosen for these rites. Up to the present time there have been brought to light but a small number of observances in connection

¹ A. Bulliot et Thiollier, *La Mission de St Martin*, p. 10 et passim.

² *De Gloria Confessorum*, ch. vi, cited by Bulliot.

³ Alfred Maury, *Légendes Pieuses du Moyen Âge*, p. 215.

⁴ Beauchet-Filleau, loc. cit.

⁵ J. B. Champeval, *Proverbes Bas-Limousins*, p. 35.

with this class of ideas; it appears, however, that one can connect them with a sort of ordeal which was practised at Neuilly St Front, near the Château Thierry, where the married couple went to the place called the "Desert," where there was an immense sandstone rock, on the surface of which were to be seen two large and deep natural furrows. There they poured out wine which the newly married couple must drink, one at the end of each furrow, and from the manner in which they drank different prognostications were drawn.¹

A frequent custom in the worship of stones is that in which the believer places his body in contact with that to which he attributes power. This is also done when visits are made to the reputed miraculous impressions.

At Spa (Belgium), women who wish to conceive put their foot in a groove in a stone called the "Pas de St Remacle."² They place the feet of children who are slow in learning to walk in three impressions left by the footprint of the Virgin at Ménéac in French Morbihan.³ At Brignoux (Vienne), the mothers carry them to the depressions in a large rock left by the slipper of St Martin. The custom is that after praying at the foot of the cross which surmounts it, there are deposited in the impression some pieces of money destined for the poor of the neighborhood who, in exchange, should say a prayer for the benefit of the donor.⁴

The pilgrims press their foot on the footprint of the Virgin which is at a short distance from the chapel of St Laurent in Deux-Sèvres.⁵

In Beaujolais, they carry children who are slow to walk to a groove in a rock called "Pierre de Clevis." In St Romain de Popey they urinate in the cavity and we are assured the cure quickly follows.⁶

¹ Ed. Fleury, *Antiquités de l'Aisne*, I, p. 106.

² Pommerol in *l'Homme*, 1887, p. 629.

³ Mahé, *Antiquités du Morbihan*, p. 442.

⁴ Beauchet-Filleau, loc. cit., p. 521.

⁵ Pommerol, loc. cit.

⁶ Claudius Savoye, *Le Beaujolais Préhistorique*, pp. 109-110.

New-born children who have a certain blue vein visible under the eyebrows, which they call "mal de St Divy," are taken to Dirinon to the stone where Ste Nonne, mother of St Divy, left the impression of her knees, in order that the saint may preserve them from the premature death which the sign portends.¹

At Besné (Loire-Inférieure), the bed of St Secondel—a granite fissure which served as a bed for this blessed hermit—is used for rubbing the pilgrims who lie down there.² Peasants lie down and invoke St Étienne in one of the basin stones which are seen at Plumergat, in the Morbihan.³ Mothers cradle their sick infants in the hollow of the horse of St Martin, at Vertolay, in the Puy-de-Dôme⁴; at Pluzunet (Côtes-du-Nord) they roll feeble children in the bed of St Idunet, which is a depression in a natural block that answered as a couch for the saint. In addition, they whip them with a broom which they afterward use in sweeping the stone.⁵

Every year on August 6th, from time immemorial the lame, the paralytic, the sick of every kind, come to the chapel consecrated to St Estapin on the top of a mountain at a short distance from Dourgues (Aude). They make the tour nine times and then go to the platform on which rocks full of holes slightly project from the earth. Then each one finds a remedy for his misery. All that is necessary is for him to insert the afflicted part into the hole in the stone to which it corresponds. The holes are of different caliber, corresponding to the head, the thighs, the arms, etc. This ceremony once performed, all attending are cured.⁶ In Basse-Bretagne the same custom is observed; when one has an injured member, he goes and places it in the hole that is on the surface of a large block of naturally rounded stone

¹ A. Joanne, *Bretagne*, p. 290.

² Richer, *Voyage de Nantes à Guérande*, p. 16.

³ Rosenzweig, *Répertoire Archéologique du Morbihan*, p. 9.

⁴ Pommerol, loc. cit., p. 629.

⁵ Ernoul de la Chenelière, *Inventaire des Mégalithes des Côtes-du-Nord*, p. 34.

⁶ *Société des Antiquaires*, 1, p. 429.

which was formerly in a field near the village of Kerangolet, in Gouesnou, and which is today in a little chapel near the country town.¹

The believers who make pilgrimages to the rock where Ste Procule left the impressions of her head, body, and arms, do not fail to apply to them their own limbs.²

The efficacy of visits to impressions, like those made in stones and fountains, depended also on the time of the day or night when they were made, which is an indication of the antiquity of the practice.

In Haute-Loire, about 1807, numbers of pilgrims visited a certain rock in which there were holes, and which bore the name "Pierre-de-St-Martin." The worship, which the clergy had vainly sought to destroy, had no satisfactory result unless performed before the rising or after the setting of the sun.³

WATER FROM MARVELOUS DEPRESSIONS

Water remaining in basins or depressions were also effective in the case of illness, as was that of miraculous fountains. Several of these little fountains were said to be inexhaustible.

Water in the depressions of the worn side of the "Pierre St Benoit," or of the "Pierre qui Pleure," at St James (Manche), always returns again into the cavities, no matter what is done to keep it out! If one succeeds in drying it up in the evening, it appears again the next morning.⁴ In Mayenne they assert that it is impossible to staunch that which refills the channels of the worn side of the Bertellière.⁵

I have been unable to discover any documents prior to the fifteenth century which mention a belief in the curative efficacy

¹ Paul du Châtelier, *Mégalithes du Finistère*, p. 25.

² Bardoux in *Soc. d'Émulation de l'Allier*, 1867, p. 348.

³ Aymard, *Le Géant du Rocher Corneille*, p. 46.

⁴ Gustave Fouju in *Rev. des Trad. Pop.*, IV, p. 156.

⁵ Moreau, *Notes sur la Préhistoire de la Mayenne*, p. 10.

of these waters, but the custom is probably extremely old, and the passage which follows the *Evangelies des Quenouilles* evidences a custom which has long had but a traditional existence. Should a woman twist her foot, it becomes necessary for her husband to make a pilgrimage to Monseigneur St Martin for her health, and that he bring back the washings of the feet of St Martin's horse and with it wash her foot and it will in a short time get well.¹ This sovereign water for strains was probably taken from the small cistern of the worn part of the "Polissoir St Martin" at Assevilliers, in La Somme, which is not far from Artois or from Flanders, where it is believed that this little book was composed.

The water of several small cisterns in Eure-et-Loir is used for the treatment of fevers. They came to drink the water which remained in the hollows of the *polissoir*, called the "Pierre de St Martin," at Nettonville and of that called the "Puits de St Martin" at Civray; they prayed on this stone and placed on it an offering. Women called "travelers" came from afar fifty years ago to seek health for the sick who could not come themselves.²

In La Creuse those suffering from fevers drank the water contained in three basins of the block *Lo Peiro de nau Ebalai*, at Soubrebost, so called because it has quite coarsely cut in its sides, nine large steps by means of which one gets on top of it. In addition, one should throw from there, unseen, a piece of money or a pin. So Cancalon³ relates that to them was attributed the power of healing eruptive diseases of the head; for this purpose they placed the upper part of the child's body in the little basin and washed it with the water contained in the larger one.⁴ At St Symphorien, near Uchon, persons formerly came to be cured of scurf, who washed the head in the large basin seen there, which

¹ *Evangelies des Quenouilles*, VI, p. 8.

² Gustave Fouju in *Rev. des Trad. Pop.*, IV, pp. 214-215.

³ *Essai sur les Monuments Druidiques de la Creuse* (1843), p. 14.

⁴ M. de Cessae, *Mégalithes de la Creuse*, p. 36.

contains water throughout the whole season.¹ The rain-water which accumulated in a basin stone worn into the shape of an angel and dedicated to St Mene, not far from the little town of Grandrieu (Creuse), like that of St Andéol, had the reputation of curing cutaneous eruptions; formerly the lotion was followed by offerings of money. As the water is quite dirty, because there are left there the head-dresses and caps of contaminated children, this basin was the object of an ironical verse :

Din lou bassin de Sain Mén
Aquel qu'a pas la rougno, l'y prén.²

People afflicted with skin diseases came to bathe in a cradle-shaped rock of a small stream in the neighborhood of St Arnoux.³ The water in the grooves of the "Pierre qui Pleure," at St James (Manche), cures fevers, several sicknesses of infancy, and trouble with the eyes.⁴ The water of a basin hollowed in a block of granite near the village of Termes, in La Creuse, also cured sore eyes, as did that which oozes into a little natural cup in the gorge of Tarn, near the hermitage of St Hilaire. After washing, they generally threw into it a pin stuck into a piece of the clothes of the sick person.⁵

The largest of the twenty-five hollows of a rock at Plouescat (Finistère), not far from the guard-house of St Eden, always holds water which passes for being miraculous against pains and sickness in domestic animals, and the pilgrims did not fail to carry some of it home with them.⁶ Horses attacked with colic are cured with the water in the cup of the "Polissoir of St Martin" at Assevilliers (Somme), where this blessed one watered his horse.

¹ A. Bulliot et Thiollier, *La Mission de St Martin*, p. 316.

² L. de Malafosse in *Antiquaires de l'Ouest*, VII, p. 75. Jules Barbot in *Rev. des Trad. Pop.*, XVI, p. 71.

³ Béranger-Féraud, *Réminiscences de la Provence*, p. 301.

⁴ Léon Coutil, *Mégalithes de la Manche*.

⁵ Jules Barbot, loc. cit. L. de Malafosse, loc. cit.

⁶ Paul du Châtellier, *Mégalithes du Finistère*, p. 77.

The sick animal should drink from this basin and then turn several times around the stone.¹

At the time of persistent drought, they went to basin rocks, the cavities of which were ordinarily filled with water the year round, and there they performed acts similar to those employed in the case of real fountains. The neighboring people to the "Pierre Pourtue" or pierced stone at Laizy, which bears the impress of the horse of St Julien, poured out holy water which they stirred with a stick or branch of boxwood, saying prayers at the same time.² At the "Baume d'Ordenche" the peasants go in a procession to a basin worn in the basalt, which they call "Fenêtre ou Tronc de St Laurent," to pray for rain necessary for their crops.³

OFFERINGS

Those who come to ask of the stones happiness or health, often deposit, after the accomplishment of the principal ceremony, offerings intended for the genii whom they desire to petition. Several of these presents were made to megaliths and bore relation to love. At Montault, at Mellé (Ille-et-Vilaine), subsequent to *la glissade*, the young girls had to place on the stone a little piece of cloth or ribbon.⁴ Those also who climbed on to the erect stone of Colombières, in order to be married during the year, left there a piece of money.⁵

In the beginning of the last century young girls wishing to procure husbands for themselves placed in the fissures of the menhirs of Long-Boël (Seine-Inférieure) flakes of wool and amulets; this custom was verified near Guérande, in 1820, by M. Montbret, who found in the clefts of the dolmen pieces of rose-colored woolen goods tied with tinsel, and they told him that these offer-

¹ C. Boulanger, *Le Ménhir de Doingt*, Somme, 1898.

² A. Bulliot et Thiollier, *La Mission de St Martin*, p. 288.

³ Pommerol, *Pierres à Bassins*, p. 629.

⁴ P. Bézier, *Mégalithes de l'Ille-et-Vilaine*, p. 101.

⁵ A. de Caumont, *Antiquités Monumentales*, I, p. 120.

ings were made in safe hiding-places by young girls who hoped to be married during the year.¹

There are still discovered in almost every hole or fissure of the menhir of "Pierre Verte," in the valley of Lunain (Seine-et-Marne), either a nail or a pin, which are from the young people of the country who come to throw them in, in the hope of soon being married.² From time to time there are found on the "Pierre St Martin" (Indre-et-Loire) sou pieces, fruit, bread, and cheese, which are offered there by those who attribute to the stone marvelous properties.³

Children carry to the Mère aux Cailles (Eure-et-Loir) slices of bread and butter, confitures, etc., which they place in a hole that is quite deeply worn in the side of the menhir.⁴ This is perhaps in remembrance of an observance on the island of Yeu, where the children, not very long ago, collected haphazard, on the road, two little stones and placed them on a small monolith situated between the town and the harbor, saying, "Grandmother, here is bread and lard."⁵ The mothers of the conscripts place on the "Pierre Dyallan," before invoking it, the branch of a tree.⁶ Formerly it was the custom to go in the spring and deposit a handful of trefoil on the dolmen called "Palet-de-Gargantua," at St Benoît-sur-Mer (Vendée), in order to be preserved from the horse Malet, which threw over a precipice those who mounted him.⁷

The presents made to basin stones and to those bearing marvelous impressions almost invariably had for their object the procurement of health. Those who came to the "Pierre-de-Terme" to be cured of trouble with their eyes, left a pin in the

¹ A. de Caumont, loc. cit.

² Th. Volkov in *Rev. des Trad. Pop.*, VIII, p. 448.

³ L. Bousrez, *Mégalithes de la Touraine*, p. 6.

⁴ G. Fouju, in *Rev. des Trad. Pop.*, X, p. 673.

⁵ Richard, *Guide à l'Île d'Yeu*, p. 40.

⁶ Victor Brunet, *Contes du Bocage Normand*, p. 137.

⁷ Abbé F. Baudry, 3^{ÈME} *Mémoire*, p. 14.

basin.¹ Pilgrims coming to the Baume d'Ordenche, to pray either for health or for rain, deposited sous in the cavity called the "Hole of St Laurent."² Those who, for the cure of certain sickness, went to the "Pierre de St Mén," near Grandrieu (Lozère), placed some money in the basin³; those suffering from fever deposited in that of the "Pas de St Martin," in Iffendic (Ille-et-Vilaine), pieces of money and little wooden crosses.⁴ The mothers of children not yet able to walk alone, placed in the impression of the "Mule de St Martin," at Brignoux, some small change intended for the poor of the place, who, in taking it, were to say a prayer in the donor's favor.⁵ Those passing by placed there as offerings a sou, or flowers, or fruits, through a grating which protected it at a "Pas de St Martin," and at a "Chaire de St Martin" in the difficult passage of "Vaux Chinon."⁶ Formerly pious souls not content to pray near the overturned dolmen of the "Pierres d'Amuré" (Deux-Sèvres), offered to it little pieces of money.⁷

Sometimes the objects deposited on the megaliths did not consist merely of an offering to the monument, but were connected rather with the widespread belief by which one can compel his sickness to pass into an inanimate object and rid himself of it by transmitting it to the one who picks it up. On the island of Sein, those suffering from fever have nine pebbles, which are carried in the sick person's handkerchief, placed for them at the foot of menhirs; the one taking these pebbles takes the fever.⁸

RESPECT PAID TO MEGALITHS

All who have concerned themselves with the opinions which the megaliths inspired to the people living near them, have con-

¹ L. de Malafosse in *Antiq. de l'Ouest*, VII, p. 75.

² Pommerol, *Les Pierres à Bassins*, p. 629.

³ Jules Barbot in *Rev. des Trad. Pop.*, XVI, p. 73.

⁴ P. Bézier, *Mégalithes de l'Ille-et-Vilaine*, p. 222.

⁵ Beauchet-Filleau, loc. cit., p. 521.

⁶ A. Bulliot et Thiollier, *La Mission de St Martin*, pp. 186, 305.

⁷ *Monuments du Poitou*, p. 10.

⁸ Joanne, *Bretagne*, 569.

curred that they have been the objects of a certain regard mixed with fear, which is probably an unconscious survival of the far-distant epoch when they played a rôle in the social or religious life with which we are but slightly acquainted, but which must have been notable. One rarely hears of irreverent acts being committed near them, or, at all events, that such should be the case among natives of their locality, but, on the contrary, one does at times encounter vestiges of the ancient veneration which is not without value in showing practices when the ancient religion and that now prevailing find each other, so to say, associated. In Aveyron the old people respectfully uncovered when they passed near the dolmen of Claparèdes called "l'Oustal de los Foderellos,"¹ but they also made the sign of the cross. To turn away witchcraft they did not fail to make the sign of the cross before the menhir of the "Femme Blanche" in the forest of Marcon.²

When the children were near a *polissoir* of Nettonville (Eure-et-Loir), called the "Bénitier du Diable" because they say the cup was hollowed out for him, they dipped up a little of the water which remained there and made the sign of the cross.³

At times even the ceremonies in which the priests took part were held near these vestiges of another religion. Before 1789 the clergy went in procession to the dolmen of Ste Madeleine (Charente), and about the same period they said mass in a boat above Druidical stones which were visible fifteen feet under water between Le Guilvinec and Penmarch.⁴

A stone of the Bois de Bersillat, at Mingot, in Côte d'Or, bearing the impression of the four feet of a horse, was visited with devotion, as it was said to be the prints of the animal ridden by St Martin.⁵ Formerly they kissed respectfully the footprints of the Virgin and the infant Jesus, near Moncontour de Bretagne; and

¹ Michel Virenque in *Mém. de la Société des Lettres de l'Aveyron*, 1868-73, p. 34.

² Ph. Salmon, *Dict. archéologique de l'Yonne*, p. 53.

³ G. Fouju in *Rev. des Trad. Pop.*, v, p. 155.

⁴ *Société des Antiquaires de France*, VII, p. 43. Cambry, *Voyage dans le Finistère*, p. 350.

⁵ A. Bulliot et Thiollier, *Mission de St Martin*, p. 288.

at the other extremity of France they kissed the footprint of the mare of Roland on the sacred rock of Ultréra.¹

In Hautes-Pyrénées the guides and others who passed by, embraced the Caillou de Arrayé (the drawn-out pebble) in making the sign of the cross. This rock dominates an enormous landslip on the road to St Sauveur on which the Holy Virgin is said to have rested when she visited the country.²

It is very likely that the respect paid to stones remarkable for their size or other particular circumstance, was due to judicial acts of which tradition has retained a remembrance, because they were carried out near them. At St Gilles Pligeaux (Côtes-du-Nord), in the center of the Roche à Sec (*Roc'h ar Lex*, the "Roche de la Loi"), broken in 1810, there was a hole which was intended to receive the post which supported the movable dome under which were sheltered the judges who came there to dispense justice.³ The "Selle à Dieu," at the edge of Arinthod, which was destroyed in 1838, was an isolated rough stone, standing in a lonely place, like a glass with a foot to it, it being more contracted in the middle of its height than at its extremities. It was provided with a place of natural form to sit upon, and according to local tradition the judge of the county formerly went there to hear the people's causes.⁴ In Aisne they refer to several natural stones near which justice was rendered in the Middle Ages, and, indeed, at a period quite near our own. The best known was a large rock still to be seen at Dhuizel, in the parish of Braine; in the middle of the eighteenth century the menhir of Chavigny, canton of Soissons, and the "Pierre Noble" at Vauregis; in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and even in the eighteenth is seen mention of the acts performed near the "Grès qui va boire."⁵

¹ J. M. Carlo in *Rev. des Trad. Pop.*, VII, p. 427. Jaubert de Réart, *Souvenir Pyrénéens*, p. 183.

² Achille Jubinal, *Les Hautes-Pyrénées*, p. 134.

³ B. Jollivet, *Les Côtes-du-Nord*, III, p. 310.

⁴ D. Monnier et A. Vingtrinier, *Traditions Populaires Comparées*, p. 427.

⁵ E. Fleury, *Antiquités de l'Aisne*, I, p. 105.

We are assured that the seigneurs formerly judged their vassals near the "Pierres de la Justice" of the plain of Champ Arnould in the Deux-Sèvres,¹ following the tradition of the three menhirs of Simandre, near Lyon, which are placed in a triangle and which have served as gallows to the Baron de Pierres.²

In Haute-Loire it is said that the seigneurs collected the tithes near a large stone called La Carte.³ The Chartreux of Gaillon (Eure) came to receive their rents near a defaced table which was placed horizontally on two vertical stones, and it is upon this that, since time immemorial, the new Brothers of Charity of Aubevoie made their vows.⁴ Formerly persons came here to render their vows of homage and faith to the chapter of the cathedral of Chartres in the place called "Pierre de Main Verte" where there are to be seen four or five large stones in the middle of a field.⁵

In presenting the numerous facts which demonstrate the very apparent survival of the worship of stones in the most anciently civilized country of the Old World, I have systematically abstained from all comparisons with what has been shown to exist in other countries of Europe. Had I done so, I would have been necessarily very incomplete, for I do not think that an inventory, like that which I have the honor here to present, has been made in countries where megalithic monuments are still found in great numbers.

I shall be very happy if this study gives to American students an incentive to seek the survival of stone worship among the aborigines of the New World. Their comparison with those of France would without doubt give many curious and interesting results.

¹ Desaiivre, *Le Mythe de la Mère Lusine*, p. 96.

² Tardy, *Le Menhir de Simandre*.

³ Aymard, *Le Géant du Rocher Corneille*, p. 56.

⁴ L. Coutil, *Mégalithes de l'Eure*, p. 63.

⁵ Lejeune in *Soc. des Antiquaires*, I, p. 5.